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TAGS: EAGR ECPS NI
SUBJECT: Nigeria's Information and Communications Sector

¶1. SUMMARY: Nigeria's information and communications
sector will implement policies to improve intra-regional
connectivity and roaming as an aid to economic growth, a
senior member of the National Communications Commission
(NCC) said. He expects that IT improvements will result in
increased economic productivity, improved educational and
health care systems, an efficient travel industry and
improved border protection. Nigeria has one of the
continent's fastest growing telecommunications sectors.
END SUMMARY.

NIGERIA'S IT POLICIES SPUR GROWTH

¶2. Executive Vice-Chairman of the NCC Ernest Ndukwe
indicated a new shift in the federal government's policy
regarding Information and Communications Technologies at a
Champion Newspaper Better Society lecture. Nigeria has
become a significant player in the Information and
Communications Technologies (ICT) market and has one of the
continent's fastest growing telecommunications sectors.
The Vice Chairman attributed this to the strong policies of
liberalization followed by administrations both in the past
and in the present. He also attributed growth to the
increasingly effective role played by the NCC.

¶3. Emphasizing the need to sustain the growth in the
sector, Ndukwe said the next phase of Nigeria's ICT policy
would target economic growth across various sectors. The
policy would strive to: ensure that continued increase in
tele-density translates to an increase in the country's
Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and stimulate increased
productivity, communication and commerce within the country
and in the sub-region, as intra-regional connectivity and
roaming facilities improve. He predicts more employment
opportunities as new professional fields and practices such
as software, telecommunications and network engineering
become prevalent. The cascading income effect of such new
occupations could help reduce unemployment and better help
Nigeria meet its Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).

ICTS AND THE MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

¶4. ICTs have already been used to great effect in
development projects in Nigeria. One successful program
provided 680 rural "phone ladies" across 12 states with
cell phones, allowing them to receive and send text
messages and phone calls for community members who would
otherwise not have phone access.

¶5. Other development-focused applications of ICTs include:
--bringing farmers increased access to markets, seed and
fertilizer availability (which also benefits rural

traders);
--increased access to information and resources for
education;
--increased access to health care providers for patients
and clinics;
--improved travel scheduling and booking systems in the
travel sector (thus supporting economic investment);
--and enhanced security and border patrol abilities as a
result of better communication.

THE SCOPE OF ICT IN NIGERIA

¶6. In 2001, available connected telephone lines for the
more than 120 million Nigerians numbered 450,000. As of
August 2007, there were 38,000,000 connected subscriber
lines, or 27 percent tele-density. Approximately 1,000,000
new subscribers join cellular services each month. In order
to stimulate demand, and increase the use of ICTs, the NCC
has implemented several initiatives, including the State
Accelerated Broadband Initiative (SABI) and the Wire
Nigeria Project (WIN), and also has focused on broadband
capability by declaring 2007 the Year of Broadband.

HUTCHINSON